

Week Ending Friday, June 5, 1998

**Proclamation 7102—Small Business Week, 1998**

*May 29, 1998*

*By the President of the United States  
of America*

**A Proclamation**

Our great Nation is renowned worldwide as the land of opportunity. Americans are dedicated to bettering their lives, pursuing the American Dream with entrepreneurial spirit and ingenuity.

Small business owners across our country are among the true heroes of our great American success story. We owe much of today's prosperity to our Nation's 23.6 million small businesses. Small businesses represent 99.7 percent of all employers, account for 47 percent of all sales in the country, employ 53 percent of the private work force, and are responsible for more than half of the private gross domestic product. New business formation reached another record level in 1997, with 884,609 new employer firms—the highest ever, and a 5-percent increase over the last record set in 1996.

Recognizing the extraordinary contributions of small businesses to the strength and continuing growth of our economy, my Administration has worked hard to implement policies and programs designed to help small businesses develop and expand. We are directing tax relief to more small businesses, expanding access to capital, supporting innovation, providing regulatory relief, opening overseas markets to entrepreneurs, and strengthening America's work force through investments in education, training, and better benefits.

The U.S. Small Business Administration plays a key role in my Administration's efforts to help Americans start, build, and grow their small businesses into the 21st century. Since the end of fiscal year 1992, the SBA extended or guaranteed more than \$48 billion in loans

to small businesses, more than in the previous 12 years combined. The SBA's current portfolio guarantees \$29 billion in loans to 200,000 small business owners who otherwise would not have access to capital. Realizing the enormous potential of today's revolution in technology, we are leading the world in the development of electronic commerce and in using the Internet to help advance small business opportunities.

As Americans observe Small Business Week, let us pay tribute to the hundreds of thousands of small business owners across our Nation whose energy, innovative spirit, and faith in our system of free enterprise have done so much to generate the unprecedented prosperity and growth we enjoy today.

**Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 31 through June 6, 1998, as Small Business Week. I call upon Government officials and all the people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs that celebrate the achievements of small business owners and encourage the development of new enterprises.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

**William J. Clinton**

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on June 3. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

### **The President's Radio Address** *May 30, 1998*

Good morning. I want to talk to you today about the role of faith in our lives and in the education of our children.

Our Nation was founded by people of deep religious beliefs, some of whom came here to escape oppression because of their beliefs. Their trust in God is enshrined in one of our most treasured documents, the Declaration of Independence. Today, Americans are still a profoundly religious people, and our faith continues to sustain us.

Our Founders believed the best way to protect religious liberty was to first guarantee the right of everyone to believe and practice religion according to his or her conscience and, second, to prohibit our Government from imposing or sanctioning any particular religious belief. That's what they wrote into the first amendment. They were right then, and they're right now.

But resolving these two principles has not always been easy, especially when it comes to our public schools. Just as our religious faith guides us in our everyday lives, so, too, do our Nation's public schools strengthen the moral foundation of our society. We trust our schools to teach our children and to give them the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life.

But schools do more than train children's minds. They also help to nurture their souls by reinforcing the values they learn at home and in their communities. I believe one of the best ways we can help our schools to do this is by supporting students' right to voluntarily practice their religious beliefs, including prayer in school, and to pursue religious activities on school grounds. Studies show that children who are involved in religious activities are much less likely to use drugs. In a world that increasingly exposes children to images of violence and immorality, common sense tells us they are more likely to stay out of trouble and live up to their full potential when they're spiritually grounded.

There's no question that the issue of prayer in schools is a complex and emotional one for many Americans. It has long been a matter of great controversy in our courts. But nothing in the Constitution requires schools

to be religion-free zones, where children must leave their faiths at the schoolhouse door.

To help clear up the confusion about what kind of religious activity is and must be permissible in public schools, in 1995 we issued comprehensive guidelines to every school district in America. These guidelines represent a very broad consensus of many religious groups. Here is what is at their core: students have the right to pray privately and individually in school; they have the right to say grace at lunchtime; they have the right to meet in religious groups on school grounds and to use school facilities, just like any other club; they have the right to read the Bible or any religious text during study hall or free class time; they also have the right to be free from coercion to participate in any kind of religious activity in school.

Now, since we've issued these guidelines, appropriate religious activity has flourished in our schools, and there has apparently been a substantial decline in the contentious argument and litigation that has accompanied this issue for too long.

The guidelines have encouraged communities to develop common understandings about what kind of religious activity is permissible in schools and help them to avoid costly lawsuits and divisive disputes. For example, after parents sued the school board because their son was wrongly punished for praying quietly in the cafeteria, St. Louis used the guidelines to adopt more explicit policies for the future. In suburban Atlanta, where schools hold workshops and distribute the guidelines to teachers at the beginning and middle of every school year, disputes about religious activity have all but disappeared.

To make sure our national guidelines are consistent with current court cases, so that more school districts follow these communities' lead, we are reissuing the guidelines with minor modifications, and we're mailing them to every school district in the country. I call on all districts to make sure the guidelines are understood and used by school principals, teachers, parents, and students themselves.

Helping communities to find common ground about religious expression is the right